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October 2, 2001

Ms. Carol Hanlon
S&ER Products Manager
U. S. Department of Energy
Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office
P.O. Box 30307 M/S 025
North Las Vegas, NV 89036-0707

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Subject: Preliminary Site Suitability Evaluation of Yucca Mountain

Dear Ms. Hanlon:

As a member of the American Nuclear Society, a registered mechanical and nuclear engineer in the State of Oregon, nuclear-trained submarine warfare officer, and former shift technical advisor at the Trojan Nuclear Plant, I have followed the debate on the scientific studies of Yucca Mountain for well over fifteen years.

Earlier reports, such as those from the National Academy of Sciences and the DOE's draft environmental impact statement, have presented a strong case for the development of a repository as the safest and most economical way to dispose of used fuel rods from commercial nuclear power plants and radioactive waste from government use.

With the substantive work done to date, and exhaustive peer reviews, I believe there is sufficient knowledge for the Federal Government to decide that a permanent repository for high level radioactive waste can be built at Yucca Mountain while assuring the safety and economy of the surrounding region.

Recent terrorist threats on our nation's infrastructure should not be used as another excuse for delaying a decision, although that is likely to be the next "excuse" Senator Reid and others from Nevada will employ. If the vague, unsubstantiated terrorist threats against nuclear power plants and the rest of our critical electricity infrastructure are genuine, they only reinforce my belief that a central, deep geologic repository is a better location than the 70-odd elevated or at-grade storage facilities located around the country.

Similarly, the hyperbole surrounding the potential targeting of casks of fuel rods in transport to Yucca Mountain is almost laughable. These casks, designed and built to withstand phenomenal rigors, have been put through exhaustive and tortuous

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testing, withstanding the destructive forces of a speeding locomotive. The elastic-plastic collision between a cask and a terrorist "weapon" is likely to resemble a game of billiards on a giant scale: lots of noise and scattering, but little or no physical damage to the exterior and no challenge to the integrity of the cask.

The time has come for the government to site, construct and open what the U.S. ratepayers and taxpayers have been paying for all these years: a permanent repository for high level radioactive waste. Much work remains and the time to act is now. The shenanigans of the political process, especially the fear mongering employed by the State of Nevada and its leaders, is an embarrassment and grievous waste of resources.

I urge the Secretary of the Department of Energy to find the Yucca Mountain repository site suitable and promptly move forward with such a recommendation to the President.

Sincerely,



David J. Modeen